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Human Rights Council
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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council

26/15 Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: violence against women as a barrier to women's political and economic empowerment

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the purposes and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations,

Guided also by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,

Reaffirming the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,

Recalling all relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council, as well as those of the Commission on Human Rights, on the elimination of all forms of violence against women, and recalling also relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and relevant resolutions and agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women,

Taking note of the important role that can be played by the regional instruments to combat violence against women,

Outraged about the continued persistence and pervasiveness of all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide, and emphasizing that such violence is a violation, abuse or impairment of human rights and as such is unacceptable,

Reiterating the need to intensify efforts at all levels to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls throughout the world,

Recognizing that violence against women and girls is rooted in historical and structural inequality in power relations between women and men, and that all forms of

violence against women and girls seriously violate and impair or nullify their enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and constitute a major impediment to the ability of women and girls to make use of their capabilities,

Recalling that the threat of violence, including all forms of harassment, is a permanent constraint on the mobility of women and girls, limits their access to resources, services and basic activities, and impedes their economic and political empowerment,

Emphasizing the need for States, and all segments of society, including civil society organizations, the private sector and the media, as well as community leaders, including tribal leaders, and religious leaders to take meaningful steps to promote the empowerment of women and girls in order to achieve gender equality and to strongly condemn and address attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women and girls,

Stressing that any custom, tradition or religious consideration should not be invoked by States to avoid their obligations with respect to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,

Acknowledging the important role that men and boys can play in preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls, and further encouraging men and boys to take an active part and become strategic partners and allies in the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, and the importance of effectively responding to violence against boys as well, in order to break the intergenerational cycles of violence,

Recognizing that poverty and lack of empowerment of women, as well as their marginalization resulting from their exclusion from social policies and from the benefits of education, health and sustainable development, can place them at increased risk of violence, and that all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence, are impediments to the development of their full potential as equal partners in all aspects of life, as well as obstacles to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals,

Recognizing also the continuing need to increase women's full and effective participation in all actions and activities related to the prevention and resolution of armed conflict, the maintenance of peace and security and post-conflict peacebuilding in line with relevant Security Council resolutions, including Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 and related resolutions,

Recognizing further that child, early and forced marriage continues to be an impediment to not only the economic, legal, health and social status of women and girls but also to the development of the community as a whole, and that the empowerment of and investment in women and girls, as well as their meaningful participation in decisions that affect them, are a key factor in breaking the cycle of gender inequality and discrimination, violence and poverty and is critical for sustainable development and economic growth,

Expressing concern about institutional and structural discrimination against women and girls, such as laws, policies, regulations, programmes, administrative procedures or structures and services that directly or indirectly regulate access to institutions, property and land ownership, health, education, employment and access to credit, which negatively affect women's empowerment and increase their vulnerability to violence,

Recognizing that indigenous women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, older women, women migrants and minorities often experience multiple forms of discrimination, which may increase their vulnerability to all forms of violence and limit their ability to participate in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political autonomy,

Expressing concern that social norms and legal constraints that restrict women's agency in the public and private sphere and their economic independence can constrain a woman's ability to leave an abusive or violent situation and reduce her ability to access protection and to secure an adequate standard of living,

Recognizing that violence against women has both short- and long-term adverse consequences for women's health, including their sexual and reproductive health, and for the enjoyment of their human rights, and that respecting and promoting sexual and reproductive health, and protecting and fulfilling reproductive rights in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences is a necessary condition to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women to enable them to enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to prevent and mitigate violence against women,

Recognizing also the important role of the United Nations system, in particular of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, in addressing discrimination and violence against women and girls at the global, regional and national levels and in assisting States, upon their request, in their efforts to eliminate and prevent all forms of violence against women and girls, and highlighting the relevance of such efforts to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals,

Taking note of the work of the Statistical Commission of the United Nations and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, towards developing a set of indicators on violence against women,

Underscoring the positive role that intergovernmental organizations, international financial institutions, regional development banks, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, the private sector, employer organizations, trade unions, media and other relevant organizations can play in supporting State action to promote women's economic empowerment and political participation, which can help to reduce violence against women and girls,

Taking particular note of the report of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda,[1] and noting other relevant contributions by United Nations agencies, programmes and funds on the post-2015 development agenda, which highlight the impact of violence against women and girls on development outcomes and consider the elimination of violence against women and women's empowerment as a key factor for achieving gender equality,

1. *Strongly condemns* all acts of violence against women and girls, whether these acts are perpetrated by the State, private persons or non-State actors, and calls for the prevention and elimination of all forms of gender-based violence in the family, within the general community and where perpetrated or condoned by the State;

2. *Urges* States and all segments of society, including all levels of government, civil society organizations, the private sector and the media, as well as community and religious leaders, to take meaningful steps to address the harmful attitudes, customs, practices, stereotypes and unequal power relations that underlie and perpetuate violence against women and girls, including by designing, implementing and evaluating national policies, programmes and strategies aimed at transforming social norms that condone violence against women and girls, and to counteract attitudes by which women and girls are

[1] *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development* (United Nations, New York, 2013).

regarded as subordinate to men and boys or as having stereotyped roles that perpetuate practices involving violence or coercion;

3. *Calls upon* States to develop or strengthen comprehensive national women-centred multisectoral responses involving relevant authorities in sectors such as justice, health, social services, education and child protection services, as well as relevant non-State actors, that focus on the prevention of violence, the provision of support services for victims and survivors of violence and the punishment of perpetrators to enable accountability and to promote the empowerment of women and girls by changing harmful attitudes, practices and stereotypes;

4. *Underlines* the detrimental impact of sexual violence in armed conflict on women's participation in the resolution of conflict, post-conflict transition, reconstruction, and peacebuilding processes, takes note of international and regional initiatives to combat sexual violence in armed conflict, and acknowledges with appreciation in this context the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which launched the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict as a tool to promote accountability and victim support;

5. *Expresses grave concern* that violence against women and girls severely limits their capacity to participate fully and effectively in society and in the development of their communities, which undermines the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals, including goals on education, health, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

6. *Urges* States to demonstrate their commitment to preventing and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, thereby reducing barriers to women's social, economic and political empowerment, including by:

(*a*) Taking effective steps to ensure the full and equal participation of women and men in all spheres of political life, including at the grass-roots level, in political reform and at all levels of decision-making, in all situations, and to contribute to the prevention and the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls;

(*b*) Taking measures to ensure women's full, equal and effective participation in all fields and leadership at all levels of decision-making in the public and private sectors through policies and actions such as temporary special measures, and by setting and working to achieve concrete goals, targets and benchmarks and implementing policies and strategies that aim to increase women's representation in parliaments and their full, equal and effective participation in policymaking in all areas, including finance, trade, defence, and foreign affairs portfolios;

(*c*) Condemning acts of violence against women involved in political processes and public debate, including women parliamentarians, political candidates and human rights defenders, by, inter alia, adopting legal and practical measures to prevent and punish such acts;

(*d*) Encouraging political parties to adopt policies, as appropriate, to promote the ability of women to participate fully at all levels of decision-making within those political parties and to combat discrimination and harassment based on sex through the implementation of anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies;

(*e*) Ensuring that legal provisions accord women an equal status in law and in practice, including in relation to the head-of-household provisions in family law and custody law, and guaranteeing women's and girls' inheritance rights and their full and equal access to and control over assets and natural and other productive resources, including full and equal rights to own and lease land and other property, and by undertaking administrative reforms and all necessary measures to give women the same rights as men to

credit, capital, finance, financial assets, science and technology, vocational training, information and communications technologies and markets, and to ensure equal access to justice and legal assistance;

(*f*) Promoting women's full participation in the formal economy, in particular in economic decision-making, and their equal access to full and productive employment, decent work and social protection, ensuring that women and men enjoy equal treatment in the workplace, as well as equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, and equal access to power and decision-making, and promoting the equal distribution of paid and unpaid work, including valuing unpaid care work;

(*g*) Empowering women in the informal economy, with particular attention to women domestic workers, who are entitled to the same basic rights as other workers, including protection from violence and abuse, fair terms of employment and a safe and healthy working environment;

(*h*) Promoting equal and full access to and control over agricultural assets and productive resources, as well as membership in professional or trade associations and access to information networks;

(*i*) Encouraging private sector investment in programmes, campaigns and strategies to respond to, prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls and to empower victims and survivors of violence, including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence;

(*j*) Promoting equal access to literacy, education, health services, food security, vocational, professional and leadership skills training, mentorship and employment opportunities, which ensure that women have access to the skills that are necessary to ensure their full political and economic empowerment;

(*k*) Promoting and protecting sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action, and the outcome documents of their review conferences;

(*l*) Improving the safety of girls at, and on the way to and from, school, including by establishing a safe and violence-free environment by improving infrastructure, such as transportation, and providing separate and adequate sanitation facilities, improved lighting, playgrounds and safe environments, and adopting national policies to prohibit, prevent and address violence against children, especially girls, including sexual harassment and bullying and other forms of violence, through measures such as conducting violence prevention activities in schools and communities and establishing and enforcing penalties for violence against girls;

(*m*) Adopting measures to enhance the awareness of women, and in particular women at known risk of gender-based violence, of their rights and the law, and the protection and legal remedies it offers, including by disseminating information on the assistance available to women and families who have experienced violence, and ensuring that timely and appropriate information is available to all women who have been subjected to lence at all stages of the justice system, and to address social stigma and legal discrimination faced by victims of violence;

(*n*) Incorporating a gender perspective into social and economic policies, including development and poverty eradication strategies, with a view to ensuring that the formulation and implementation of relevant strategies contribute to women's economic empowerment, thereby reducing their risk of violence;

7. *Affirms* the need for States to collect thorough and accurate data and statistics on violence against women and girls, disaggregated on the basis of sex, age, disability and other relevant variables, to measure its impact on socioeconomic development and to strengthen the effectiveness of legislative and policy measures aimed at reducing barriers to women's political and economic empowerment;

8. *Welcomes* the panel discussions on gender stereotyping and on women's human rights in the context of the sustainable development agenda, held during the annual full-day discussion on women's human rights at the twenty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council, and requests the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to present a report summarizing the panel recommendations to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-seventh session, and subsequently to transmit the report to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session;

9. *Recalls* the invitation extended to the Office of the High Commissioner by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 23/25 to include, during the annual full-day discussion on women's human rights to be held at the twenty-ninth session of the Council, a discussion on the issue of gender-related killings;

10. *Encourages* Member States to include a target for ending all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls in the elaboration of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the emerging post-2015 United Nations development agenda, and to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment in all sustainable development goals;

11. *Welcomes* the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and takes note of her thematic report on developments in the United Nations regarding violence against women, its causes and consequences over the past 20 years;[2]

12. *Takes particular note* of the report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice,[3] addressing discrimination against women in economic and social life, in which the aspect of violence against women is explicitly underlined, and encourages synergies between different relevant United Nations agencies and other actors in efforts to effectively eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls;

13. *Decides* to continue its consideration of the issue of the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, as a matter of high priority and in conformity with its annual programme of work.

38th meeting
26 June 2014

[Adopted without a vote.]

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[2] A/HRC/26/38.
[3] A/HRC/26/39.